7:Lewis S-5 (ca. 1940-45) 1948 MD1 Syria MD1

area. The English merchants who passed through the hills in 1678 noted that Jebel Bil'as was "covered with Trees, which, for the most Part, were the small *Pistacho*'s which the *Arabs* pickle with Salt; but eaten green, are good to quench Thirst"; and in 1691 they ascended a ridge to the east of Jebel Bil'as where the tree cover is now sparse and found it "cover'd on both Sides with great plenty of Turpentine-Trees," which grew "very thick and shady," several of them "loaded with a vast Abundance of a small round Nut."[15]

In spring, when surface water is available and the pasture is excellent, the hills are full of flocks; and several hundred thousand sheep, together with some goats and camels, pasturing each year for about three months cause much damage. Bedouin and peasant shepherd families burn vegetation on the spot, and woodcutters from Selemiya and the villages cut large amounts of the valued slow-burning pistachio wood. Vegetation has been destroyed in these ways since prehistoric times, but at certain periods the process has been quickened. Between 1914 and 1918 the Turkish authorities took great quantities of wood as fuel for the railroads. Local notables say that within living memory trees extended beyond Aquerbat; that is, several miles into the country now cultivated and treeless. The westernmost range, Jebel Shomariye, has lost all its woods, and a ridge to the east, which was "overgrown in some places" with terebinth trees in 1908,[16] is today bare. A new danger to the soil of the hills has resulted from the high grain prices now prevailing, the growing population pressure in the region, and the tendency of Arab tribes to settle down to agriculture; for now increasing areas of land on the western fringe of the hills are being plowed.

Malaria control on the plain must clearly be accompanied by soil conservation in the hills, and, ideally, both should be part of a larger scheme of regional rehabilitation. Such a scheme would cover, among other matters, irrigation, malaria control, vegetation conservation, farming practices, and grazing rights. It would mean radical changes in the region; it would require a large capital outlay; and it would necessitate government action of a scale and vigor practically unknown in Syria. It is impossible to discuss here whether such a scheme would be economically justifiable, or possible within the present social and political framework. One can only emphasize that some such comprehensive action must eventually be taken if the problems of the region are to be solved.

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[15] "An Extract of the Journals" (*op. cit.*), pp. 132 and 143 [Miscellanea Curiosa, pp. 123 and 137–138].

[16] Alois Musil: Palmyrena, *Amer. Geogr. Soc. Oriental Explorations and Studies No. 4*, 1928, p. 44.

V. THE WESTERNIZATION OF SOCIETY

1

THE first and most obvious sign of social change is the growth in the population of the French Mandated Territories in the last four generations. For some centuries previous to 1800 the population had been steadily declining. In the course of the nineteenth century it began to increase; by 1914 it may have been in the neighbourhood of two and a half millions. Since then it has grown ever faster, because of the abolition of conscription, the decline in emigration, the rise in the standard of living and the improvement in medical and sanitary services. To-day the total population is nearly four millions.

The distribution of the population between the different provinces of the country is as follows:

Syria:	Province of Damascus	531,267
	" " Aleppo	752,196
	" " Homs	182,312
	" " Hama	137,882
	" " the Hauran	108,603
	" " the Euphrates	218,667
	" " the Jazirah	103,514
	" " Latakia	371,880
	" " Jebel Druze	70,706
	Total	2,477,027[1]
Lebanon:	Province of Beirut	232,000
	" " Mount Lebanon	278,000
	" " Northern Lebanon	241,000
	" " Southern Lebanon	198,000
	" " the Biqa'	167,000
	Total	1,116,000[2]

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Two-thirds of this population live in villages and are dependent upon agricultural occupations. The total area of the country is some 58,000 square miles; but only about 10–15 per cent of it is cultivated. An equal area could however be brought under cultivation if swamps were drained, barren wastes irrigated, and the margin of agriculture pushed eastwards into the deserts.

[1] Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, *Rapport à la Société des Nations sur la situation de la Syrie et du Liban, 1938* (Paris, 1939), pp. 220-1. These figures exclude the Beduin population, who number over half a million, and also the population of Alexandretta, which was ceded to Turkey in 1939 (see Chapter XI). They are not to be accepted as more than a rough approximation. An estimate for 1944 gave the population of Syria as 2,800,000 (excluding the Beduin).

[2] Figures for 1942.

14:International Bank S-5 (1954) 1955 MD1 Syria MD1

challenging task of fusing the positive elements of both its eastern and its western heritage into a cohesive whole.

Population and Land

According to official estimates, Syria at the end of 1953 had a population of about 3.65 million, including some 150,000 Bedouins who lead a nomadic or semi-nomadic existence. Although demographic statistics are far from adequate, it appears probable that the population has been growing at an annual rate of somewhere between 2% and 3% during the last decade. Most of the population is rural:[1] about 60% live in villages and towns of less than 10,000 inhabitants, and each of the two largest cities—Damascus, the capital, and Aleppo, the commercial center of the country—has a population close to 400,000. About 86% of the population are Moslem or belong to offshoots of the Moslem religion, and nearly all of the balance are adherents of a considerable number of Christian denominations.

As a country with an area of 181,337 square kilometers (72,234 square miles), about three-fourths the size of the United Kingdom, Syria cannot be said to be densely populated. While less than a third of the area is cultivable, the proportion of the population to the land already under cultivation compares favorably with that of other countries in the Near and Middle East. In Syria there is one hectare[2] of cultivated land per inhabitant, or about 10% more than in Turkey and Iran, twice as much as in Greece and Iraq and eight to nine times as much as in Egypt.

There is still plenty of land available in Syria but water severely limits its utilization. The country lies to the leeward of mountain ranges in the west and north which intercept much of the rainfall. Except for the coastal region of Latakia province, Syria is largely cut off from the rain-bearing winds of the Mediterranean by mountains, the Djebel Ansariya (Alaouit mountains) in Latakia, and, farther south, after the intervening Tripoli-Homs gap, by the twin ranges of the Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon which in turn give way to the Hermon range. Thus the area which can support rain-fed cultivation is confined to a rather narrow belt extending roughly like a crescent from the Hauran in the south northward to Aleppo and then eastward along the Turkish frontier. Fortunately for Syria, its

[1] See Annex C, p. 292.
[2] A hectare = 2.471 acres.

14:International Bank S-5 (1954) 1955 MD1 Syria MD1

To meet the cost of this program over the next five or six years the mission suggests that additional funds of £S 500,000 be made available to the forestry service.

Settlement of State Domain

The employment of state land for the establishment of peasant proprietors is already declared government policy. Article 22 of the 1950 constitution stipulates that "The State shall distribute among landless peasants, at a small cost to be paid by instalments, sufficient land to secure their livelihood"; and decrees issued by the Minister of Agriculture on November 1, 1952 and January 15, 1953, provide for the sale of government land in parcels of 50 or 10 hectares, depending on whether the land is irrigated.

The immediate need for settlement arises from certain localized population pressures and from the growing desire of the Bedouins to adopt agriculture. Population pressures are most marked in the provinces of Latakia and Djebel Druze where, according to rough estimates, the amount of cultivated land available per person is less than 50% and a little over 60%, respectively, of the average for Syria as a whole. The reclaimed land in the Ghab and the Roudj should help in particular to relieve the overcrowding among the agricultural population of the Alaouit mountains in Latakia. According to the Ministry of the Interior, the Bedouins number about 150,000, half of whom, however, are said already to be engaged in some form of settled agriculture. Many Bedouins apparently tend to squat on unoccupied land which they cultivate more or less sporadically and often with extremely poor results. For them the availability of good land in such a province as the Jezireh is of paramount concern.

The mission has given special attention to the problems involved in settling reclaimed and irrigated areas and of undertaking certain experimental settlements in dry-farming regions. The government has not yet drawn up settlement plans for the Ghab and the Roudj, although this task is becoming urgent, particularly for the latter. For the settlement of the Bedouins certain initial steps have been taken. The government has set aside and divided into allotments 100,000 hectares in the Radd area of the Jezireh and is in the process of dividing another area of 50,000 hectares in the same province. Part of the first area has already been allocated to Bedouins but is being leased to large operators for three years in order to

14:International Bank S-5 (1954)1955 MD1 Syria MD1

governmental, representing 8.7% and 2.2%, respectively, of total investment in settlements. Municipal investment is directed to water supply,[1] roads, power plants and distribution networks and sewerage facilities, in that order; very little goes for housing. Government investment is primarily in buildings, chiefly for education and public health purposes.

The mission has assumed, in preparing its proposed program for settlements and social services, that the estimated 1954 population of 3.65 million will increase over the next five years at a rate of only 1.5% annually, rather than the 2% rate of recent years. If the program is to be properly adjusted to Syria's needs, however, a population census and an improvement in the collection and organization of vital statistics are urgently needed. Better public health conditions, economic development, opening of new areas and new lines of transport and communications, changes in social patterns—all will bring about major changes in size and distribution of the population over the next few years. Any policy developed for the settlements should be planned with an eye not only to the immediate future but also to the longer term economic, social and cultural development of the country.

II EDUCATION

A PROGRESS TO DATE

For centuries, and especially during the years of foreign occupation, the only formal educational facilities were the Koranic schools, which concentrated on religious teaching. A decline in the number of these schools began about 150 years ago, and with it a gradual change in their curriculum; today about one-third of the time is devoted to religion. Meanwhile the number and significance of state primary schools has been increasing. In these, during the French occupation, the pattern of education was influenced by traditional French systems.

Since independence, Syria has started to develop its education at a faster rate and to give it a Syro-Arabic pattern. The effort of these few years and the success achieved is impressive. The budget of the Ministry of Education rose from almost £S 17 million in 1946 to £S 36.8 million in 1953, and its share of the total budget increased from 13.5% to 17.7% (in 1923 it had been only 9.1% and in 1931 9.8%). Between 1946 and 1953 the

[1] Water supplies in Damascus and Aleppo, however, are financed by government funds.

POPULATION AND VITAL STATISTICS

تقدير عدد سكان الجمهورية السورية في نهاية عام ١٩٥٢ ونسبتهم لمساحة الاراضي (١)

POPULATION ESTIMATES AS AT THE END OF 1952 AND RATIO TO LAND AREA (1)

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Table No. 1 جدول رقم (١)

MOHAFAZAT	عدد السكان Population	المساحة كم ٢ Area km.2	عدد السكان في كل كيلو متر مربع Population per km.2	المحافظات
TOTAL	3,433,636	184,479	18,613	المجموع
Damascus (2)	738,227	19,528	37,805	دمشق (٢)
Homs	261,904	41,650	6,288	حمص
Hama	196,665	7,222	26,859	حماة
Latakia	540,675	6,090	88,927	اللاذقية
Aleppo	1,025,674	22,919	44,752	حلب
Al-Hasakah	177,388	22,170	8,001	الحسكة
Deir-es-Zor	251,548	55,090	4,569	دير الزور
Sweida	98,713	5,550	17,786	السويداء
Dir'a.	141,832	4,200	33,770	درعا

(1) Survey estimates, 1951
(2) Including Damascus City

(١) حسب تقدير المساحة عام ١٩٥١
(٢) بما فيها مدينة دمشق المنارة

3:Royal Institute of International Affairs U-4 (no date)1954 M1 Middle East
SYRIA MD1
LEBANON ME1

twenty degrees of latitude. The desert in Syria is of rock and gravel more than of sand, and there are hills rising above 3,000 feet both north and south of Palmyra; more than a third of the total area of Syria is steppe or desert.

Rivers

The Orontes flows from the northern part of the Biqaa through the lake of Homs (which holds about 260 million cubic yards of water) to Hama and through the Ghab depression to Turkey. The Litani rises not far from the Orontes but flows at first southward and later west through a deep gorge in the Lebanon mountains into the sea between Tyre and Sidon. The Euphrates runs through Syria for about 430 miles and has, as tributaries from the north, the Balikh and the Khabur. It is on the Euphrates and its tributaries that there is the best prospect of developing hydro-electricity and irrigation.

Climate[1]

Over this diverse scene the temperatures vary in the year from below freezing to above 100°F., and on the same day it is possible to ski near the cedars of Lebanon and swim in the sea at Beirut. The rain, which in most places comes between November and February, varies from almost nothing in the desert to about 40 inches a year in the mountains. In the coastal strip the winters are not severe but there is high humidity and small diurnal variation in the summer and this makes the season seem unpleasant and prolonged. In the mountains the snow lies on the topmost peaks for most of the year and the road from Beirut to Damascus is blocked by snow at times in most winters; in the summer the days are hot but the nights are cool enough to draw up to the mountains most of the inhabitants of Beirut. The plateaux and desert have an inland climate with low humidity and higher extremes of heat and cold. Aleppo has greater extremes than Damascus but in both cities there is a distinction between the four seasons: spring from mid-March to mid-May, summer from mid-May to the beginning of October, autumn in October and early November, and winter from November to March.

The People

Official statistics showed that in 1951 the populations of Syria and of Lebanon were 3,329,137, and 1,303,941 respectively. Over half the inhabitants are engaged in agriculture, about half a million are nomads, and the rest live in towns. The

[1] See table, below, p. 501.

Royal Institute of International Affairs U-4 (no date)1954 M1 Middle East
SYRIA MEI
LEBANON MDI

chief towns of Syria and their populations are: Aleppo, 339,000 Damascus, the capital, 303,000; Hama, 134,000; Latakia, 90,000; Dair az-Zor, 65,000: of the Lebanon—Beirut, the capital, 247,000; Tripoli, 86,000; Sidon (Saida), 78,800; Zahle, 78,031. The population of each country is increasing by about 2 per cent a year. Between half a million and a million Syrians and Lebanese live abroad, mainly in the Americas and Africa; emigration continues; during 1952 about 100 Lebanese emigrated monthly, most of them to South America.

Religions

RELIGIOUS SECTS AND PARLIAMENTARY REPRESENTATION

	Syria		Lebanon	
	Population in 1947	*Seats in 1947*	*Population in 1951*	*Seats in 1952*
Sunni	2,040,908	100	273,125	9
Shiis (incl. Alawis)	447,993	13	237,107	6
Druze	96,641	3	82,268	3
Maronite	14,133	1	377,544	13
Orthodox Greek	144,517	7	130,858	5
Orthodox Armenian	104,925	2	67,139	2
Orthodox Syrian (Jacobite)	43,081	2	4,562	
Catholic (Latin rite)	6,125		4,127	
Catholic (Greek rite)	49,543	2	81,764	3
Catholic (Syrian rite)	17,613	1	5,911	
Catholic (Armenian rite)	17,493	1	14,218	
Catholic (Chaldean rite)	4,991			
Protestants	11,959		12,641	
Nestorians	9,630			
Jews	30,873	1	5,993	
Others			6,684	
Minorities		3		1
TOTAL:	3,043,310	136	1,303,441	44

The language of the great majority of Syrians and Lebanese is Arabic, and they think of themselves as Arabs. There are minorities of race, religion, and language:[1] the Kurds number between 100,000 and 200,000 and are mainly in northern Syria; most of them speak Kurdish but are progressively becoming less and less distinct from the Arabs. The Armenians, who live mainly in the three principal cities, now number about 140,000, although some 20,000 emigrated to Soviet Armenia in the 1940's. Most of them came as refugees from the Turks after the First World War. Other racial minorities are the Turkomans, Circassians, and Assyrians. Most of the religious sects

[1] For further details see A. H. Hourani, *Minorities in the Arab World* (London, Oxford University Press for RIIA, 1947).

25: Warriner S-5 (no date) 1948 MI Middle East
Lebanon ME1
Syria MD1

During the recent war there was an expansion of cultivation in Syria as a result of high prices and mechanization. The previous table shows the cultivable and cultivated land in different provinces and the distribution of these areas in 1943.

Little is known about the rate of population growth, but it is believed to be rapid. According to the most recent estimates the total in 1944 was 3,987,012, of which the population of Syria was 2,860,411 and of the Lebanon 1,126,600. The population of Syria was divided as follows:

SYRIA: POPULATION AT END OF 1943

Province	*Total*
Latakia	452,507
Aleppo	870,139
Hama	157,458
Homs	212,424
Hauran	112,842
Damascus	603,889
Euphrates	225,023
Jezira	146,001
Jebel ed Druz	80,128
TOTAL	2,860,411

(This estimate excludes the Beduin, whose number is estimated at 400,000.)

About three-quarters of this total, or about 2·1 million, are rural. The amount of cultivated land per head is 2½ acres, but because cultivation is so extensive the area actually cropped is only some 1½ acres.

Lebanon, by contrast with the dry plains of Syria, is intensively cultivated because of the high rainfall on the coast line; yields per acre are higher, and crops are more diversified, including citrus, olives, bananas; small irrigation schemes have been developed along the coast on the streams from the Mountain. The Lebanon depends for part of its grain supply on Syria, and all the cultivated land is cropped. The cultivated area in 1943 amounted to 1·3 million acres. The total population in 1944 was estimated to be 1,126,600; of this probably about 750,000 are rural, and the amount of cultivated land is about 1½ acres per head.

Grain production in Syria and Lebanon together before 1939 averaged 800,000 tons and rose to about 1 million tons during the recent war.

S 242 185

70. The Mission as will be seen, formed a favourable impression of those whom it saw at Nashabeyeh. It was regrettable to learn that not only was the extension of the work hampered by lack of funds but that some local difficulties had arisen which suggested that there might still be some distrust of disinterested outside help in quarters that could not plead ignorance as an excuse. We had not the opportunity of pursuing inquiries to enable us to satisfy ourselves whether, if foreign direction and support were withdrawn, the work undertaken by the Foundation would collapse or become self-supporting, a point which had first been suggested to us in talks in Lebanon (see paragraph 10). We were, however, satisfied that if the venture were to collapse, it would not be due to any lack of a spirit of service or enthusiasm on the part of the Syrian field workers who are employed by the Foundation.

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71. The country is under-populated and the population is so scattered as to make it difficult to provide the usual facilities through community centres. It should be added that there are large tracts of empty but arable land; so that if, as a result of efficient health services, the expectation of life increases and infant mortality decreases, there is no danger of lack of food.

72. Recommendations: In the light of the present cautious attitude of the Syrian Government towards the receipt of technical assistance from external sources, we recommend that the initiative should be left with the Government to seek United Nations aid for the furtherance of any scheme of community organizations for which it may be directly or indirectly responsible.

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III. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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73. The "Middle East" is a convenient but misleading description which may be applis to a group of Arab-speaking countries, not all of which were included in our itinerary. Those which we were privileged to visit have many features in common, in spite of differences in characteristics and ways of life and varying stages and patterns of development. The Islamic faith prevails over the greater part of the area, though in some countries there are important non-Moslem minorities. Each country is the inheritor of an ancient culture; each has subscribed to the United Nations Charter, with its emphasis on improved standards of living as a contributing factor to the peace of the world; each is predominantly agricultural; each, in a newfound independence and under conditions of political instability, is reforming its land laws; and each has proclaimed the welfare of the people as a dominating purpose of Government policy.

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74. In progress in community development in this group of countries little uniformity is to be observed. In Egypt, where the establishment of rural social centres became the official policy in 1939, after successful pioneering experiments conducted by the Egyptian Association for Social Studies, a stage has now been reached at which the whole scheme is under review, with the object of increasing its scope and efficiency. A reorganization involving decentralization and more inter-departmental co-ordination was in progress as we left Egypt.

75. We have found that Egypt is, compared with other Arab countries, well advanced as regards rural social centres since the population, or at least a part of it, understands the value of self-help. These social centres have to be expanded, both as regards numbers and the use made of each one of them. They do not require costly special buildings; provided that attention is paid to cleanliness, the work can be carried out in suitably equipped village houses, always assuming that the staff has the right spirit. To ensure a continuous standard of efficiency, regular supervision

63:Simmons et al G-5 (1941-1951) 1954
M1 Middle East
SYRIA MD1

POPULATION AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

Population

The people of Syria are predominantly of ancient Semitic stock, modified by centuries of conquest, and Arabic in culture, language and religion. The population, however, includes numerous minority groups, some of which exist as compact communities with distinctive customs and traditions. The official method of enumeration is on the basis of religious affiliation. In 1949, the population was estimated at about 3,177,700, exclusive of undetermined numbers of Bedouin, representing less than 10 per cent of the total. Approximately 86 per cent of the inhabitants were adherents of Islam; about 69 per cent belonged to the Sunni sect. The heterodox sects consisted of roughly 355,500 Alawites, 100,600 Druzes, 32,800 Ismailites, 13,700 Shiites and 2,900 Yazides.

Syria, like Lebanon, has important indigenous Christian minorities, which together account for almost 14 per cent of the population. As of 1949, the Greek Orthodox Church claimed about 153,900 members; the Armenian Orthodox, 107,300; the Syrian Orthodox, 44,970; and the Greek Catholic, 51,500. Other church groups, comprising Armenian, Syrian and Roman Catholics, Maronites, Nestorians (Assyrians), Chaldeans and Protestants, each numbered from 5,000 to 18,000. In addition, there were slightly over 31,000 Jews, mainly of Sephardic origin and with a long history of residence in Syria. With the exception of about 125,300 Armenians and 10,200 Assyrians, the members of the Christian minorities are largely Arabic-speaking and closely related to their Moslem compatriots. Most of the Armenians have come to Syria since 1894 as refugees from Turkish territory. The majority reside in the larger towns, particularly in Damascus and Aleppo, but considerable numbers have settled in the Al Jazira region. The Assyrians who fled to Syria from Iraq in 1933 and the Chaldeans

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162 167 dwell in the Khabour river basin. The Syrian Orthodox and Catholic churches flourish in the north, where the inhabitants of many [191] mountain villages employ Syriac dialects, preserved since pre-Islamic times.

795 Prominent among the Moslem minorities are the Alawites and the Druzes. Although both are scattered throughout the country, they are found primarily in the provinces, which, under the Mandate, were semi-autonomous units of the Levant. The Alawites inhabit the province of Latakia, comprising the coastal plain and a large part of the Orontes river valley, where they represent about 70 per cent of the population. The Druzes form a closely knit religious community which migrated to the Jebel ed Druz highlands from Lebanon in the last century.

162 Several racial and linguistic minority groups are contained in the orthodox Moslem majority. About 200,000 Kurds reside in Syria, chiefly in Aleppo and Al Jazira provinces and in the city of Damascus. A large proportion have lived for generations on the fringes of Kurdistan, within the pres- [167] ent boundaries of Syria. but some are recent colonists from eastern Turkey to the Al Jazira area, where they constitute a considerable part of the population. Smaller non-Arabic-speaking groups include about 30,000 Turkomans, settled around Aleppo and in the Orontes river valley, and almost 20,000 Circassians, found along the northern frontier and in the Euphrates river basin.

Over three quarters of the population live in the western and the northwestern provinces, with the greatest concentration in the coastal region, in the vicinity of Damascus and Aleppo, and in the Homs and the Hama areas. In the interior, the settled districts are limited to the river valleys, while the steppe and the desert country to the east and the south constitute 161 the home of nomadic Bedouin tribes. In 1948, the density of population in Latakia was estimated at 215 per square mile. In the province of Aleppo it was 113 per square mile; in the province of Damascus, 90 per

161 square mile; in the province of Hauran, 80 per square mile; and in the province of Hama, 77 per square mile. In contrast, the population density of Al Jazira, incorporating the potentially fertile plains of the Khabour river basin, was 18 per square mile. The country is about 70 per cent rural, with the inhabitants living in some 5,000 villages. There are 6 principal cities with populations of over 30,000 — Damascus, Aleppo, Homs, Hama, Latakia and Deir ez Zor. Damascus, the capital and a city of commercial and religious significance, had a population of almost 325,100 in 1949. Aleppo, an industrial and trade center, and the largest city in Syria, had a population of about 356,600. It disputes with Damascus the claim of being the oldest city of continued prominence in the world.

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In addition to the older refugee communities, as the Armenians, the Assyrians and the Druzes, which have become established minority groups, Syria received an influx in 1948 of about 150,000 Arabs from northern Palestine. Approximately 80,000 located around Damascus; others in Hauran and the northern provinces. Their status and ultimate distribution were still undetermined in 1952, when the number on the roster of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees totaled 84,000. Over one third resided in special camps, but the remainder were living independently in the various towns and villages.

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During the Ottoman regime, large numbers of Syrians emigrated to the Americas, and to Europe and Africa. Although they probably total almost 60,000, the Syrian colonies abroad are small in comparison with those of the Lebanese, and their influence on the cultural and the economic life of their homeland is proportionately slight.

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The educational system has undergone revision since the founding of the republic in 1943, with increased emphasis on its adaptation to the culture and the needs of the people. Elementary education is compul-

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p. 138(B)

Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees and the Ministry in the Khabour and the Belik river basins in 1950,[8, 9] blood examinations were performed on small representative samples of the population. All age groups were included, although the majority of persons tested were under 15 years of age. The parasite rates averaged about 33 per cent in villages in the Belikh valley, while in the areas under perennial irrigation along the Khabour River and its tributaries, they varied from 33 to 94 per cent. In the rain-irrigated districts northeast of Hassetché, the rates declined to from 12 to 16 per cent. In many localities the malaria problem has been aggravated by the introduction of rice cultivation. In some, as in Ajaja, cultivation had to be abandoned, and in others, it is prohibited within a 2-mile radius of the villages.

The malaria season extends from April to November, with peaks of prevalence in July and October, but some transmission occurs throughout the year in most malarious regions. The relative proportion of *Plasmodium vivax* and *P. falciparum* infections varies according to the season and from place to place. *P. vivax* is usually responsible for 75 to 80 per cent of the cases of malaria in the Damascus area. *P. falciparum* and *P. vivax* were identified with about equal frequency, however, in the 1950 surveys in the Belikh and the Khabour valleys. In general, *vivax* predominates during spring and early summer, but is superseded by *P. falciparum* toward the end of the malaria season. *P. malariae* infections are rarely encountered.

Malaria control measures are undertaken by the municipal authorities in Damascus, Aleppo and a few other towns. Control programs, based upon residual spraying with DDT preparations or Gammexane, are conducted in towns and villages in limited areas by the Ministry of Health, often in conjunction with other agencies. In 1950, they covered villages in Damascus and Hauran provinces, the town of Latakia and a few localities in Jebel ed Druz. The most exten-

SILICOSIS AND BENIGN PNEUMOCONIOSIS ARE among the most important occupational diseases, but recognized cases are relatively few in number.

The smoking of *Cannabis indica* (hashish) and other types of drug addiction were formerly common. Within recent years they have been combated with some success by restrictive regulations and educational propaganda.

SUMMARY

Modern Syria, an independent republic since 1943, encompasses three of the former Levant states—Syria, Latakia and Jebel ed Druz. It has a population of slightly less than 3.2 million which is predominantly Moslem and Arab, but which includes several important religious and racial minority groups. Over three quarters of the inhabitants live in the western and the northwestern provinces which form the western arm of the so-called "Fertile Crescent."

The Ministry of Health (and Public Assistance), with headquarters in Damascus, is responsible for the health and the medical care of the population. Subordinate provincial health departments carry on the activities of the Ministry in each of the 9 *muhafazats*, or provinces. Autonomous municipal organizations function in Damascus, Aleppo, Homs and Hama. A limited number of philanthropic, mission and international agencies carry on health services in close co-operation with the Ministry. In 1951 there were 47 hospitals in Syria, with an aggregate capacity of 2,255 beds—approximately 0.7 beds per 1,000 inhabitants. Of this number, 22 hospitals, with 1,525 beds, were supported by the government, and the remainder by private organizations. In the same year, the Ministry maintained 111 clinics and dispensaries scattered throughout the country, including 3 maternity and child welfare centers, 7 mobile dispensaries and 6 mobile units for the treatment of specific diseases.

Water supplies are usually deficient, ex-